

*Protocol of the Council Meeting, March 26, 2017*

**Report by Josef Beverfoerde based on his two hour audience with Card. Raymond Leo Burke in the beginning of March 2017.**

Reiteration of his experiences told by *Cardinal Patronus Burke* concerning the most recent events in the Order of Malta and his own person.

On September 9, 2014, Cardinal Burke had a private audience with Holy Father Francis, during which the Pope informed him of his removal from his post as Prefect of the Highest Court of the Apostolic Signature and of his nomination as *Patronus* of the Sovereign Order of Malta. The Holy Father gave his reason and task as to effect the “due purging of the secular spirit in the Order of Malta, specifically Freemasonry.” He [Francis] said that he wanted to employ a younger Cardinal for this job, an American.

The Cardinal answered that he had no experience dealing with Freemasons and asked the Holy Father if he could provide concrete information as to who these Freemasons in the Order are. The Holy Father retorted that he had no specific information, yet he was sure of their existence in the Order. The Pope explained Burke’s task would be to find out which people are Freemasons and to insist that they be expelled from the Order. He was also tasked with putting an end to the secularization of the Order.

During the time between the first meeting of Card. Burke and Pope Francis on the case of the Knights of Malta and Burke’s nomination as *Cardinal Patronus*, the Asia-Pacific Conference of the Order took place, October 2014 in Hong Kong. During this conference the General Secretary of Malteser International, the world wide relief organization of the Order under the patronage of the Grand Hospitaller, reported they handed out contraceptives – condoms, as well as pills, of which at least some act as abortion inducing – in different parts of the world. Multiple members of the Order immediately raised objections and filed a formal complaint with the Grand Master. The Grand Master, hitherto not informed about the issue, began to investigate these immoral practices. When Burke became *Cardinal Patronus*, the Grand Master asked him for advice on how to proceed. The *Cardinal Patronus* told him that the whole situation needed to come to a stop immediately and that the responsible party could not enjoy the trust of the Order anymore. Finally, the Grand Master assembled a commission of inquiry which published their first report in January of 2016. The report presented a very clear case of the distribution of contraceptives by organs of the Order.

The report of the commission was given to the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith for analysis. On March 12, 2016 the Prefect, Card. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, wrote a letter to the Grand Master in which he approved the report of inquiry with the words: “The suggestions of the report mentioned above are in accordance with the doctrine and praxis of the Church.” Additional to other outcomes the report clearly identified that the Grand Chancellor, Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager, who had served as Grand Hospitaller for 25 years, had recognized the morally reprehensible practices and had intentionally avoided informing the Grand Master and the Sovereign Council about them.

These deceptive actions by certain authorities of the Order were justified in discussion, with the argument that the procedures were done according to the counsel of the Spiritual Chaplain of Malteser International, Bishop of Troyes (France), Bishop Marc Stenger. Yet, it remained the

responsibility of those who had tolerated these practices to know the teaching of the Church with regards to contraception and abortion and to form their consciences accordingly.

Since the publication of the report of inquiry, the culpability of the Grand Chancellor was evident. The Grand Master informed Card. Burke that he had asked the Grand Chancellor to resign, and that he had declined up to that point. In the following month, the Grand Master informed Cardinal Burke of further efforts to convince the Grand Chancellor to take responsibility and to resign. Since the *Cardinal Patronus* felt himself responsible for the spiritual constitution of the Order, Burke encouraged the Grand Master in this way of action, so that the scandal about the distribution of contraceptives could not continue unchallenged and bring further moral irritation into the Order.

The next private audience between Burke and the Holy Father took place on November 10, 2016. The Holy Father wanted to know from Card. Burke what progress had been made in his assigned mission. The Cardinal laid out his great worry about the growing secularization within the Order but told him that he had not up to that point been able to find out the names of the Freemasons. He reported to the Holy Father that he was most of all deeply disturbed by the immoral practices which had been performed for some time by Malteser International, that is the distribution of condoms but also of pills, some abortion inducing.

It was clear to the Cardinal that in addition to the scandals themselves, there had been dissent within the Order on questions of the Doctrine of the Church concerning contraception. From among the highest dignitaries there had been the expressed order to keep quiet about the grave immoral actions, which had been justified in turn by good results among the poor. The truth is that it fostered the collaboration of the Order with state governments and the United Nations, especially in cases where financial subventions were received. For this sake immoral practices, which the Church had rebuffed without compromise, were accepted.

**Citation Card. Burke:**

*“Pope Francis expressed deep concern and disappointment about the distribution of contraceptives in places where the Order offered relief. He urgently asked me to work intensively together with the Grand Master so that every continuance of this praxis should be stopped and that the highest person responsible for it should be disciplined in an appropriate manner.”*

Additionally the Pope asked him to find the lists of Freemasons that had to exist somewhere. The Holy Father communicated his intention to write a formal letter for the *Cardinal Patronus* in which he would confirm this intention and list instructions on how the Order had to be reformed by Burke and the Grand Master, so that the Order could be brought back to its original noble mission to defend the faith and care for the sick.

The Holy Father wrote the promised letter on December 1, 2016 and Card. Burke received the text together with a copy for the Grand Master on December 5.

Immediately after Cardinal Burke received the letter, he asked – with the knowledge that he would leave for a 12 day voyage to the United States on December 7 – the Grand Master for an immediate meeting. In the meantime he forwarded in direct manner the writing that was addressed to the Grand Master by the Holy Father.

In the letter the Holy Father asked the *Cardinal Patronus*, in accordance with what he had told him during the audience of November 10, 2016, to deal with three specific areas of problems together with the Grand Master:

1. Against signs of a secular spirit within the Order as well as the membership of Knights and Dames in groups, movements, or organizations, which stand against the Catholic faith and which are imbued with relativism;
2. Specifically to take care that methods and means of contraception contrary to the moral law will not be handed out, neither in the initiatives nor in the acts of the Order;
3. And to recreate a clear and close relation to the Roman Pontifex, which holds together the Order in its structure as well as its mission.

Even though the letter did not expressly mentioned Freemasonry – contrary to what the Pope had told the Cardinal in their meetings on September 9, 2014 and November 10, 2016 – Cardinal Burke understood this to be the primary concern of the Holy Father. This was also clear in an event of June 23, 2016, the vigil of the Patron feast for the Order. Pope Francis had then received the Grand Master and the Sovereign Council, among them Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager in an audience. The Pope asked about the progression of Cardinal Burke in the cleansing of Freemasons from the Order. The *Cardinal Patronus* was not invited to this private audience. After this audience the Grand Master was very surprised at Cardinal Burke and wished to for an explanation about the request made by the Holy Father in relation to Freemasonry in the Order.

Up to that point the *Cardinal Patronus* had understood the content of the conversation on Freemasonry within the Order with Pope Francis on September 9, 2014 as being sealed by Pontifical Secret. Now that the Holy Father had spoken with the Grand Master and other officials about this topic, he shared his concern with the Grand Master as the Pope had informed him on the first day of his appointment as *Cardinal Patronus* of the Order.

With regards to the second concern of Pope Francis – the elimination from the Order of every method and means of contraception which are contrary to the moral teaching of the Church – the Grand Master adamantly asked Cardinal Burke to be present during the meeting of December 6, 2016. During this meeting the Grand Master requested Albrecht Boeselager to resign under obedience due to his collaboration in the handing out of contraceptives during Boeselager's time as Grand Hospitaller as well as his time as Grand Chancellor.

**Card. Burke in citation:**

*“During the meeting on December 6, 2016 I did not claim to have a mandate of Pope Francis that would allow me to ask for the resignation of the Grand Chancellor, and therefore I did not at any time ask him to resign in the name of the Holy Father. I uttered two statements that were results of the Papal letter:*

1. *That it is in my eyes unacceptable that an organization of such high historic as well as Catholic standing as is the Knights of Malta was involved in so many scandalous practices over an extended period of time without making the officer in charge responsible for the events while he tolerated them; and,*
2. *That in case of a false report of the commission of inquiry – as the Grand Chancellor claimed – as to why he never filed a formal complaint for the correction of the document, given the fact that the report made his person as Grand Chancellor the main figure responsible for the events that happened.”*

Burke added also that the Grand Chancellor had not given a response to this report. That did not surprise Cardinal Burke in the least, since he had been informed, in at least two instances since his nomination as Cardinal *Patronus*, that Malteser International handed out contraceptives. Burke had openly insisted on the discontinuation of these practices after the Grand Chancellor had told him in an open discussion with a group of members in the Magisterial Palace, Boeselager insisting that: “We have to give these poor women contraceptives, or they will die.” Burke’s last statement during the meeting of December 6 made it clear that he saw it as his responsibility to tell the Pope – with regards to the Grand Chancellor’s letter – that the Holy Father expected the Order to deal with this serious issue. The Holy See should not need to feel responsible to take it upon itself to intervene any further.

### **Yet another Burke citation:**

*“Since the Cardinal Patronus does not have any jurisdictional power, I had no authority whatsoever to ask the Grand Master how he ought to proceed, and in fact I didn't. Yet, I did, as I have said, make it clear according to my responsibility that the highest official and member responsible for these grave moral practices need to take responsibility. Subsequently I left the meeting and went home. Without my participation the Grand Master continued, and he dismissed the Grand Chancellor, who had refused to step down under obedience.”*

After the dismissal of Albrecht von Boeselager the *Cardinal Patronus* learned, during his trip in the United States, that the Cardinal Secretary of State had written a letter to the Grand Master. This letter expressed that Cardinal Burke had told the Grand Master on December 6 that the Pope had asked for the (Grand Chancellor’s) dismissal, which is totally untrue. He (the Grand Chancellor) called the Cardinal Secretary of State to provide evidence for the confirmation of his letter’s claims. The only answer that he received was that it was a case of emergency.

One has to know here that the Cardinal Secretary of State and Albrecht Freiherr v. Boeselager had been in a close relationship. When the intention of Pope Francis to nominate Card. Burke as *Cardinal Patronus* became clear, the Grand Chancellor went to the Cardinal Secretary of State and protested. Pope Francis personally told Cardinal Burke that Albrecht v. Boeselager had protested against him, since the Cardinal Secretary of State had communicated this to the Holy Father. From the first day of his position the Grand Chancellor had made it abundantly clear to the *Cardinal Patronus* that the former had a very direct line of communication to the Cardinal Secretary of State. For example, in a delicate dealing concerning the religious character of the Order, Cardinal Burke was not willing to write a letter requested by Boeselager. In turn, Boeselager recounted the matter to the Cardinal Secretary of State, and henceforth Burke received no response and never knew how the issue was finally resolved.

The close relationship was particularly tangible during the process of nomination of a prelate for the Order. Pope Francis had told Card Burke his wish in a private audience that – in contrast to times past – the position ought to be filled with a young bishop who could concentrate on the formation of the Order’s chaplains and members in general, instead of naming a Papal Nuntio emeritus, as it had been done historically. The Grand Chancellor had himself already picked two Papal nuntii and tried – with the help of the Cardinal Secretary of State – to effect the nomination of his preferred candidate. In a meeting in the magisterial Palace, Boeselager told Card. Burke that he was called by the Cardinal Secretary of State and that the Order had to hand in a list of three candidates including the names of former nuntii. When Card. Burke expressed his surprise and told

the Grand Chancellor that he had intended to follow what the Pope had told him, Albrecht v. Boeselager told the *Cardinal Patronus* that he should not disregard the directives given to him by the Cardinal Secretary of State. Cardinal Burke called the Cardinal Secretary of State on the same day to protest against the involvement of Boeselager. Card. Parolin denied claims that Boeselager had even been made part of the whole situation.

After three years as *Cardinal Patronus* Burke had the clear impression that the Cardinal Secretary of State had been involved in the highest dealings of the Order by way of the Grand Chancellor, while Card. Parolin had never disclosed his involvement with the Order to the *Cardinal Patronus*. Card. Parolin's actions on Dec. 12, 2016 mirrored this experience one more time.

On Dec. 22, 2016 the Cardinal Secretary of State wrote to Card. Burke and forwarded to him a copy of the letter of Pope Francis, dated on December 21, 2016, along with a letter of his own from the same date. In his letter, the Holy Father asked the Grand Master to simply accept decisions in regards to the Order as they were announced in the letter by the Cardinal Secretary of State. Card. Burke was not consulted in the decisions made.

In the said letter of December 22, the Cardinal Secretary of State informed the *Cardinal Patronus* that the Papal letter said that the whole business of the Order was in a hiatus until a further intervention of the Holy See. This intervention would follow after the Holy See had found clarity from a group to be assembled for the sake of making inquiries into the situation. Burke was very surprised about the compiling of the commission ("group") since all the four members were known to be supporters of the Grand Chancellor.

After the letter of December 22, 2016, there was no communication of the Holy See towards Burke with regards to the Order.

Despite multiples attempts by the *Cardinal Patronus* to be heard in this case, he has hitherto not been informed of any development in the Order. Before Christmas and after the announcement of the special inquiry into the issue by the commission, Card. Burke sent an urgent letter to the Holy Father and asked him for a private audience. He received no response. After hearing news on the results of the meeting of the Sovereign Council regarding the stepping down of the Grand Master, he called the office of the Holy Father on January 28 to ask one more time for an audience. There he received the brusque answer that his wish was communicated to the Holy Father. He has not heard anything since.

Concerning the resignation of the Grand Master, Fra' Matthew Festing, Festing called Cardinal Burke on January 24 at 7:00 pm and told him that he had been called to a meeting with Pope Francis earlier that day at 5.30 pm with the indication to not tell anybody about the meeting prior. Festing recounted that Pope Francis had praised him highly and then asked him to resign and to formulate a resignation letter. Festing explained further that in the letter he was to write down that Cardinal Burke had influenced him in his decision to demand the demission of Albrecht v. Boeselager. This statement, which Festing admitted to have included in his letter of resignation, was completely false and unfounded.

Cardinal Burke asked the Grand Master why he had written this letter of resignation without taking the time to think it over and to ask for warranted counsel, especially considering that the promise of a Grand Master includes fulfilling his office for the Order until the end of his life. Festing

answered that his obedience towards the Holy Father had left him no other option. When Burke asked why he had written that Burke had influenced him in the decision to dismiss the Grand Chancellor, he received the same answer.

At the end of our audience, Cardinal Burke also mentioned another issue: the gigantic fund of 120 million Swiss Francs, which is designated to the Order as a donation in large part.

Already in the beginning of his time as Cardinal *Patronus*, the Cardinal's attention had been pointed towards this fund by a Knight who has vast experience in financial questions. This Knight complained about, in his opinion, false dealings with this inheritance case by the Grand Chancellor. Cardinal Burke followed his responsibility and pointed this out to the Grand Master, who responded to him that he had hitherto not been informed about it.

For the full length of time, even until today, no one has been able to inform the Cardinal about the details of this inheritance to the Knights of Malta: not its nature, its exact amount, the type of fund, or the receivers of the returns over the last three to four years. The fact that three people in the commission of Pope Francis inquiring into the crisis of the Order were or are still involved with this fund, gives strong rise to the suspicion that there exists a relation between the fund and the reinstatement of the Grand Chancellor due to the recommendation of the Papal commission. In the estimation of the Cardinal it is in this situation absolutely necessary to clear up all grave question in this case in order to safeguard the well-being of the Order and the Church, by an independent audit.

At the end of his story, Cardinal Burke explained literally:

*"I find it deeply unsettling that this grave scandal of the distribution of contraceptives and the continuous secularization of the Order has been reduced to a minimal issue and already has been successfully made to be forgotten. In the countless press conferences, interviews, and other media interventions from the side of the Orders since the reinstatement of the Grand Chancellor, this grave scandal has not been brought up for discussion in any place and the responsibility of the Grand Chancellor has not been taken by him. In my view it can be feared that the veiling of this scandal, which lies at the root of the most recent crisis in the Order is not a good sign for the renewal of the order according to its long lasting, noble, and fully Catholic tradition."*